February 3, 2022

Dr. Jeremy Farrar
Director
Wellcome
215 Euston Rd.
London NW1 2BE

Dear Dr. Farrar:

We are conducting oversight of the U.S. government's response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and specifically apparent conflicts of interest, suppression of scientific discourse, and abuse of official government resources. Documents in the custody of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) reveal how a group of scientists—including you—initially believed COVID-19 to be man-made before reversing course and claiming otherwise following discussions with senior government health officials. This sequence of events suggests a possible coordinated effort to conceal evidence pointing to a lab leak in Wuhan, China, and make your cooperation vital to our investigation. To restore public confidence in the scientific process regarding the origins of COVID-19, it is imperative you provide answers under oath about what, if any, underlying science changed in a matter of days after meeting with top government health officials.

On February 1, 2020, according to records, you took part in a teleconference with Dr. Francis Collins, Dr. Anthony Fauci, and other scientists.[1] Dr. Collins and Dr. Fauci were the only two U.S. officials on the call. Before, during, and after the call, some scientists expressed grave concerns that COVID-19 may have leaked out of the Wuhan Institute of Virology and that COVID-19 may have been partially engineered.[2] It is unclear whether Dr. Collins or Dr. Fauci ever relayed these serious concerns to policymakers through the proper chains of command. According to the NIH documents:

- On January 31, 2020, Dr. Kristian Andersen wrote in an email to Dr. Fauci and others: "The unusual features of the virus make up a really small part of the genome (<0.1%) so one has to look really closely at all the sequences to see that some of the features (potentially) look engineered . . . . Eddie [Holmes], Bob [Garry], Mike [Farzan], and myself all find the genome inconsistent with expectations from evolutionary theory."[3]

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[1] E-mail from Dr. Jeremy Farrar to Dr. Anthony Fauci, et. al. (Feb. 1, 2020) (On file with Comm. staff).
[2] Letter from Hon. James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight & Reform, and Hon. Jim Jordan, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on the Judiciary, to Hon. Xavier Becerra, Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Services (Jan. 11, 2022).
[3] E-mail from Dr. Kristian Andersen to Dr. Anthony Fauci & Dr. Jeremy Farrar (Jan. 31, 2020) (On file with Comm. staff).

- On February 2, 2020, Dr. Robert Garry similarly wrote, "I really can't think of a plausible natural scenario . . . . I just can't figure out how this gets accomplished in nature . . . . Of course, in the lab it would be easy . . . ."[4]

- On February 2, 2020, Dr. Michael Farzan wrote he was "bothered by the furin site and ha[d] a hard time explain[ing] that as an event outside the lab . . . . I am 70:30 or 60:40 [lab]."[5]

- On February 2, 2020, Dr. Andrew Rambaut stated, "From a (natural) evolutionary point of view the only thing here that strikes me as unusual is the furin cleavage site."[6]

- On February 4, 2020, Dr. Edward Holmes indicated that he was "60-40 lab . . . ."[7]

- On February 4, 2020, you wrote, "I am 50-50 [lab]."[8]

Despite these private statements, you and the other scientists were later involved in the drafting and publication of a correspondence in *Nature Medicine* entitled, "The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2" [hereinafter Proximal Origin].[9] Proximal Origin unequivocally stated a consensus view "that SARS-CoV-2 is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus."[10] Proximal Origin was written by February 4, 2020, less than 48 hours after each of the authors privately expressed concern on the teleconference that COVID-19 originated in a lab.[11] It is unclear what scientific facts, if any, changed in that short amount of time. Newly released communications suggest that Dr. Collins hoped Proximal Origin would "put down" the hypothesis that COVID-19 originated in a lab and that Dr. Collins, in fact, wanted to do more to silence this debate.[12] Specifically, Dr. Collins wrote to Dr. Fauci: "I hoped [Proximal Origin] . . . would settle this . . . . Anything more [NIH] can do?"[13] Dr. Collins's question about what "more" NIH could do to "settle" the debate implies that he, Dr. Fauci, and the NIH were involved in an initial effort—i.e. Proximal Origin—to suppress dissent about the origins of COVID-19.

Alarmingly, it appears that the decision to suppress the lab-leak hypothesis was rooted in political calculations rather than scientific principles. NIH documents show that scientists on the February 1, 2020, teleconference pushed the natural evolution theory because they believed the

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[4] Letter from Hon. James Comer, *supra* note 2.
[5] *Id;* "Furin" refers to COVID-19's Furin Cleavage Site. Generally, Furin is a protease enzyme that breaks down proteins into single amino acids, to then form new proteins. This is done by cleaving bonds within specific proteins. COVID-19's unique Furin Cleavage Site enhances transmissibility and ability to infect other tissue types in the body.
[6] *Id.*
[7] *Id.*
[8] *Id.*
[9] Dr. Kristian Andersen, et. al., *The proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2,* NATURE MEDICINE (Mar. 17, 2020).
[10] *Id.*
[11] E-mail from Dr. Edward Holmes to Dr. Jeremy Farrar (Feb. 4, 2020) (On file with Comm. staff).
[12] Letter from Hon. James Comer, *supra* note 2.
[13] *Id.*

lab-leak hypothesis could direct too much scrutiny toward China. For example, in one email, Dr. Collins claimed a lab-leak hypothesis would do "great potential harm to science and international harmony."[14] Similarly, Dr. Ron Fouchier claimed a lab-leak hypothesis would do "unnecessary harm to science in general and science in China in particular."[15] In fact, Dr. Garry later stated the consensus on the teleconference was "1. Don't try to write a paper at all . . . or 2. If you do write it[,] don't mention a lab origin as that will just add fuel to the conspiracists."[16]

Proximal Origin was subsequently cited as scientific proof that COVID-19 did not originate in a lab in the now infamous letter in *The Lancet* entitled, "Statement in support of the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China combatting COVID-19."[17] The scientific community, media, and Big Tech used *The Lancet* letter to censor and suppress all other hypotheses, going so far as to call the lab leak hypothesis a "conspiracy theory."[18] Eventually, more than a year later, *The Lancet* published an addendum clarifying previously undisclosed monetary conflicts of interest.[19]

Transparency is a bedrock of scientific credibility. Continuing to shield the truth equates to hiding information that may inform future pandemic responses, advise the United States' current national security posture, and restore confidence in our public health experts. We therefore request the following documents in your custody by February 17, 2022:

1. All drafts of "The Proximal Origins of SARS-CoV-2" between January 31, 2020, and March 17, 2020.

2. All documents and communications regarding the Wuhan Institute of Virology, EcoHealth Alliance, Inc., and the origins of COVID-19 between or among you and the following individuals:
    a. Dr. Francis Collins;
    b. Dr. Anthony Fauci; and
    c. Dr. Lawrence Tabak.

3. All documents and communications regarding the convening of the February 1, 2020 teleconference.

4. All documents and communications resulting from the February 1, 2020 teleconference.

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[14] *Id.*
[15] *Id.*
[16] Maria Hibbett & Ryan Grim, *House Republicans Release Text of Redacted Fauci Emails on COVID Origins,* THE INTERCEPT (Jan. 12, 2022).
[17] Dr. Charles Calisher, et. al., *Statement in support of the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China combatting COVID-19,* THE LANCET (Feb. 19, 2020).
[18] *Id.*
[19] Editors of The Lancet, *Addendum: competing interests and the origins of SARS-CoV-2,* THE LANCET (June 21, 2021).

5. All documents and communications regarding the drafting and publication of "The Proximal Origins of SARS-CoV-2" subsequently published in *Nature Magazine*, between or among, but not limited to, the following individuals:
   a. Dr. Francis Collins;
   b. Dr. Anthony Fauci; and
   c. Dr. Lawrence Tabak.

We also request that you appear for a voluntary transcribed interview with Committee staff no later than February 24, 2022. In addition, to allow a full and complete record of these documents to be produced to the Committee in response to future document requests, please:

1. Preserve all e-mail, electronic documents, and data ("electronic records") created since December 31, 2019, related to requests (1) through (5) above. For the purposes of this request, "preserve" means taking reasonable steps to prevent the partial or full destruction, alteration, testing, deletion, shredding, incineration, wiping, relocation, migration, theft, or mutation of electronic records as well as negligent or intentional handling in a manner that would make such records incomplete or inaccessible;

2. Exercise reasonable efforts to identify and notify former employees and contractors, including subcontractors and consultants who may have access to such electronic records in an effort to ensure these records are to be preserved; and,

3. If it is the routine practice of any employee or contractor to destroy or otherwise alter such documents or electronic records, either halt such practices or arrange for the preservation of complete and accurate duplicates or copies of such records, suitable for production if requested.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,

James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform

Steve Scalise
Ranking Member
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis

Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary

cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable James E. Clyburn, Chairman
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis

The Honorable Jerrold L. Nadler, Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Xavier Becerra, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dr. Lawrence Tabak, Acting Director
U.S. National Institutes of Health